Against Icons

And the False Distinction Between Veneration and Worship

The Greek word for "image" is εἰκών, eikōn, from which comes the word "icon". It is used 23 times in the New Testament and 32 times in the Septuagint (Strongs), the Greek translation of the Old Testament, an important witness to the Scriptures.

Image (eikōn) is used in the New Testament for the picture of Caesar on a denarius coin (Mat. 22:20; Mark 12:16; Luke 20:24), for idols (Rom. 1:23; Rev. 13:14-15, 14:9, 14:11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4), for Christ as the image of the Father (2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15), for men as the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7), for Christians as the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10), and for the tabernacle and temple as images of heavenly things (Heb. 10:1).

Image (eikōn) is used in the Septuagint for humans as the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6), Adam's son Seth as his image (Gen. 5:3), for the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31-32, 2:34-35), and predominantly for idols (Deut. 4:16; 2 Kings 11:18; 2 Chron. 33:7; Isa. 40:19-20; Ezek. 7:20, 16:17, 23:14; Dan. 3:1-3, 3:5, 3:7, 3:11-12, 3:14-15, 3:18; Hos. 13:2), in which case it is synonymous with εἴδωλον, eidōlon, "idol".

The Greek word used by the idolaters for "veneration" is προσκυνέω, proskyneō, which means to kiss, bow to, kneel before, prostrate to, make obeisance to, pay homage to, or worship. It is used 60 times in the New Testament and 10 times in the Septuagint (Strongs). The KJV translates all 60 New Testament uses as "worship" (Strongs).

The Greek word used by the idolaters for "worship" is λατρεύω, latreuō, which means to serve, minister to, render religious

service to, pay homage to, or worship. It is used 21 times in the New Testament and 89 times in the Septuagint (Strongs). The KJV translates the word in the New Testament 16 times as "serve" and 3 times as "worship" (Strongs).

It is evident *proskyneō* and *latreuō* are synonyms, with only slightly different shades of meaning. Scripture treats them synonymously, as will be shown primarily from the New Testament, and secondarily from the Septuagint.

Mat. 4:8-10 (KJV)
8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship [*proskyneō*] me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship [*proskyneō*] the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve [*latreuō*].

Luke 4:5-8 (KJV)
5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship [*proskyneō*] me, all shall be thine.
8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship [*proskyneō*] the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve [*latreuō*].

Acts 7:38-43 (KJV)
38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship [*latreuō*] the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?
43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship [*proskyneō*] them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

Acts 10:25-26 (KJV)
25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped [*proskyneō*] him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

Rev. 22:8-9 (KJV)
8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship [*proskyneō*] before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship [*proskyneō*] God.

Exod. 20:2-6 (KJV)
2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself [*proskyneō*] to them, nor serve [*latreuō*] them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Exod. 23:20-26 (KJV)
20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. 21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. 22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. 23 For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. 24 Thou shalt not bow down to [*proskyneō*] their gods, nor serve [*latreuō*] them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.
25 And ye shall serve [*latreuō*] the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. 26 There shall nothing cast their

young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

Exod. 32:7-10 (KJV)
7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped [*proskyneō*] it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

Exod. 34 (KJV)
11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. 12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: 13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: 14 For thou shalt worship [*proskyneō*] no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: 15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; 16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

It is evident from these passages that both *proskyneō* and *latreuō* are reserved to God alone! There is no meaningful distinction. Satan tempted Jesus asking for "veneration", and Jesus said both "veneration" and "worship" are to be given to God alone. Both Peter and an angel rejected "veneration", both saying only God should receive "veneration". If "veneration" of them in person was forbidden, so much more forbidden is the "veneration" of a mere picture of them! Icons are figures made to "venerate", just like an idol. "Veneration" of an icon is idolatry. Just like King Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent (that Moses made by God's command) when people were burning incense to it, so should any image or icon be destroyed when people begin to "venerate" it. If "veneration" of a man, who is in the image of God, is forbidden, so it is forbidden to "venerate" any image of God. Any picture of Jesus is not Jesus, and so any picture of Jesus may not be "venerated" or "worshiped".

Veneration of icons is repugnant to the Word of God, and a severe danger to one's eternal salvation.

Rev. 9:20 (KJV)
And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship [*proskyneō*] devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Rev. 13 (KJV)
1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up

out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped [*proskyneō*] the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped [*proskyneō*] the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?
5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship [*proskyneō*] him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship [*proskyneō*] the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down

from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image [*eikōn*] to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image [*eikōn*] of the beast, that the image [*eikōn*] of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship [*proskyneō*] the image [*eikōn*] of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.
18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Rev. 14:6-12 (KJV)
6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship [*proskyneō*] him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship [*proskyneō*] the beast and his image [*eikōn*], and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The

same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship [*proskyneō*] the beast and his image [*eikōn*], and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Rev. 16:1-2 (KJV)
1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped [*proskyneō*] his image [*eikōn*].

Rev. 19:20 (KJV)
And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped [*proskyneō*] his image [*eikōn*]. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Rev. 20:4 (KJV)
And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had

not worshipped [*proskyneō*] the beast, neither his image [*eikōn*], neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Veneration of icons is antichrist! The religion of the antichrist will be the veneration of an icon of the beast. Those who do not venerate the icon of the beast will be killed. Anyone who venerates the icon of the beast will be damned. Anyone who venerates the icon of the beast is ἀνάθεμα, anathema, accursed from Christ. Anyone who promotes the veneration of icons is preparing people to receive the mark of the beast. Woe to those false prophets, woe to those wolves in sheep's clothing! It would be better for them to have a millstone tied around their neck, and be cast into the sea, than to cause one person to commit idolatry by the veneration of icons.

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." (1 Cor. 10:14, KJV)